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Report on Youth Activities and Employment

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Sheridan Today and Yesterday
October 1997

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I. Introduction

The purposes of this project were: first, to identify and research **successful** youth employment and activities programs for students ages 12-17; second, to produce a written report; and third, to submit the report to the Sheridan Today and Yesterday Neighborhood NRP (Neighborhood Revitalization Project) Committee for implementation into their NRP process dealing with youth issues.

This report will highlight many successful programs that are in the Sheridan neighborhood or that affect the neighborhood. The report will include examples of what other neighborhoods have done with the help of the NRP. There will also be scenarios about what can be done through Sheridan Today and Yesterday in their NRP process from three perspectives, the greatest amount of NRP money, the least amount of NRP money, and finally, what could be done with NO NRP money.

II. Inventory

This section identifies some of the most active groups in the Sheridan neighborhood and highlights the ones with the capability to make a profound impact on the neighborhood.

- **What's up line**

While the “What’s Up Line” is not technically in the Sheridan neighborhood, its services do cover the whole city of Minneapolis. The What’s Up Line is one of the most comprehensive telephone resource lines that a young person in the City of Minneapolis can call to find information on things to do. The line is run by youth and is paid for by the City and other private sponsors such as Brookfield LePage, Karwoski & Courage Public Relations, McKnight Foundation, Paragon Cable, Quick Print, Stay Alive Project, and Transtop. The What’s Up Line was created by the Youth Coordinating Board (YCB) to increase the numbers of youth participating in positive activities.

The What’s Up Line was the first youth information line in the Twin Cities and is aimed at youth from 7-18 years of age. When a young person calls, a peer answers the call and finds information for the caller on many things such as sports, community education, job opportunities, mentoring programs, park events, civic groups, weekly events aimed at youth, and many other miscellaneous activities. All the information is

stored on the What's Up database that logs all the youth programs and activities in the City.

The line is very user friendly; it has reasonable hours (Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. –8 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday 12 p.m. – 5 p.m.), an easy telephone number to remember (399-9999), and an office downtown in the City Center where the calls are answered and young people can walk in. All the combined services provided by the What's Up Line make it one of the most valuable youth resources for any neighborhood in Minneapolis.

- **Parks**

Bottineau and Logan Parks, in the neighborhoods adjacent to Sheridan are another asset to the youth of the Sheridan neighborhood. The parks are widely used, and they provide the youth of the Sheridan community with a wide array of activities, such as baseball, softball, tennis, swimming, camps, cooking lessons, dancing lessons, arts and crafts, and field trips to a wide variety of places and special events.

The parks could be the single most important asset to young people living in the Sheridan neighborhood. In the summers, the parks are jammed, sometimes to the point of capacity. With the hard work of the park employees, the parks seem to be reasonably well staffed and managed. The parks offer a vital and accessible resource to the youth and the neighborhood.

Bottineau Park is slated to acquire the gymnasium from the A Chance To Grow School for after-school programs; this will add to the already extensive programs offered.

- **Libraries**

The neighborhood library of Pierre Bottineau is currently a small storefront type of library. Even though library activities are aimed at a younger age group than was specified for this report, this library is slated, through NRP money, to have an internet hook up open to the public. This will provide the youth of the Sheridan neighborhood with a close and convenient place to go to access the internet.

- **A Chance to Grow**

A Chance to Grow is a new school that will be opened near the Sheridan neighborhood at 112 - 19th Ave. NE and will teach students with traumatic brain-injuries and students with learning disabilities. The new school will be located across from the Bottineau Park and will be renovated substantially to accommodate the school's needs. Also, the school will open its doors to the community and allow local residents to use the facilities. The facilities will include a library/media center, meeting space, kitchen and dining space, and a gymnasium.

The new school will notably impact the youth of the Sheridan neighborhood if it is used effectively. The media center, with its computers, will provide a chance for

free access for the community. With this, youth will have the opportunity to gain necessary computer skills. A Chance to Grow's Gymnasium is planned to be owned publicly by way of Bottineau Park. This will insure that the facility will remain open to the public. It will also fill the needs of Bottineau Park, as the park currently has no gymnasium. All of the facilities are planned to be used by the Minneapolis Park Board in its After School program to insure the maximum utilization of all resources.

All the plans for a Chance to Grow are subject to change since the project is still in the developmental phase.

- **Minnesota Work Force Center**

The Minnesota Work Force Center is already conducting youth employment programs. The programs include a summer work program which is run from June to August. This program is open to any "at risk" youth from the age of 14-21 years old who is a resident of Minneapolis. The offices are open to anyone on an individual referral basis.

The services of the Minnesota Work Force Center also include a school program where the representatives go out into schools. There are a number of services and workshops that staff from the Minnesota Work Force Center provide in the schools; one of them is job referral which matches up employers and the students who are the most appropriate for the positions available. The Work Force Center also provides seminars for youth which stress the importance of how to get a job and how to keep

the job once a student has one.

The Minnesota Work Force Center operates in the high schools and some middle schools, but services will be provided to any school that makes a request. The Work Force Center also conducts seminars outside the school setting upon request. This combination of programs makes for good youth employment services; additional services will increase the strength of the existing programs make them even better.

- **The Quarry**

The Johnson Street Quarry Shopping Center which is currently opening has great potential for youth employment. The new shopping center will create between 1500-1800 new jobs, and most of these jobs, in stores such as Rainbow Foods, Target, and Home Depot, will be filled by young people. The new shopping center will assist the youth of Sheridan, and it will help all the youth of North East Minneapolis when it comes to providing additional opportunities for youth employment.

III. Examples

Following are examples of what other neighborhoods have done through the NRP and without the NRP:

- **Youth Coordinator Programs**

Hiring a youth coordinator is one good way to use funds from the NRP to address the issues of youth, but it is also a costly and unsustainable way. Youth coordinators have been hired in the Seward and Powderhorn Park Neighborhoods, where they have been very successful in getting youth involved in activities.

The problem with the NRP funded youth coordinators is that the NRP does not allow for sustained employment. This problem could be solved by the acquisition of grant money once the neighborhoods NRP funds have been depleted. Applying for funds to keep the program running would then become part of the coordinator's job description.

- **Non-Coordinator Programs**

Most communities have chosen to respond to the issues of youth by developing a variety of non-coordinator based programs because of the variety of needs and challenges in their communities. Many different programs have been tried and some have been successful. Some of the plans that have been attempted have included mentoring, youth and seniors mentoring, youth construction teams, camps, crime awareness workshops, and youth run businesses.

The major problem that these programs have to overcome is that, in most all the cases, they depend heavily on volunteer staff to establish and help run programs, which can easily burn-out volunteers and possibly jeopardize programs. This problem is one that should be expected and accounted for in any program that is set

up this way. The success of the program must be insured in some other way because even a great program is vulnerable to the menace of volunteer burn-out.

There are a few ways to avert the burn-out of volunteers. The first method, employment of a youth coordinator is the easiest to maintain and gives the neighborhood the most control of the program's destiny. The second method is to enlist the support of other charitable organizations to create or help the program. This is also an effective way of securing the success of the program, but it usually requires some compromise so the programs will fit the charitable organization's requirements.

- **Programs with Partners**

By far the most commonly used form of starting a youth program is to enlist a partner; it is also the NRP's preferred way of starting programs. Partnering has been undertaken with many different organizations such as the YMCA, Big Brother-Big Sister, Catholic Eldercare, East Side Neighborhood Services, Minneapolis Parks, Youth in Minneapolis After School Program, Minneapolis Kid, and others.

Gaining a partner for a youth program can really help the NRP process. It can also help to the neighborhood to garner more funds which can then be funneled to cover the overall costs of the NRP action plans. The benefits of gaining a partner for a youth program far outweigh the negatives.

IV. Sheridan Neighborhood's Wants and Needs

The residents of the Sheridan Neighborhood have addressed the needs of the neighborhood on the topic of youth in the following venues:

- **Neighborhood Meeting**

In a meeting with neighborhood youth and adults, there were many things that were discussed regarding youth activities and employment. The group was asked to come up with three things for each of the topics. Then the group discussed the ideas and voted, which resulted in a list of priorities as they pertained to each of the topics of employment or activities.

A few clear wants of the group came out of the meeting. On the topic of employment, the most popular option was for the neighborhood to set up a neighborhood employment center or to have an employment coordinator to assist the youth of the area in their job hunts. On the topic of activities, the votes were a little more spread out with the most popular being a “hang out” which would include things like dances, video games, pool tables, and other recreational activities. The next on the list of votes was improvement of sports facilities. Then came internet classes to teach youth how to use the internet and how to set up web pages. Identifying some of the wants and needs should provide a better understanding of what should be done on each of the topics discussed. As a result of this meeting, some serious consideration should be given to all of them as they all have considerable merit.

V Scenarios of What Can Be Done

In this section, four possible scenarios will be given to show what can be done.

The scenarios will range from a “Utopian” scenario where money is of no concern to a “Bare Bones” scenario where things are stripped significantly but may still be effective.

- **The Utopian Scenario**

The neighborhood would hire staff to deal with the issues of youth.

This staff would address all concerns of the youth of the Sheridan neighborhood.

They would do so by setting up a youth employment service that would help the job-seeking youth of the neighborhood by providing training, leading job seeking skills workshops, running a chore service, establishing mentoring relationships, placing youth in jobs and providing guidance and counseling. The staff would also be in charge of putting on events for the youth of the area and running camps and field trips to fun places weekly. The youth organizers would also be able to create new programs for youth if they were deemed fit to serve the youth of the Sheridan neighborhood. All of the funding for this staff would be of no concern and would continue indefinitely.

- **The NRP Heavy Scenario**

In this scenarios, the neighborhood would hire two people to deal with issues of youth. The first person would be in charge of youth activities. His/her job would include finding activities for youth and dealing with the problems that youth face in implementing new programs.

The second person would handle the youth employment program. This individual would be in charge of helping the youth of the Sheridan neighborhood with job skills and placement.

All of the funds would come from NRP.

- **The NRP Light Scenario**

In this scenario, the neighborhood would hire one person to deal with both youth activities and youth employment. The person would set up both programs, similar to the services listed above.

The neighborhood could also choose not to hire and try to start programs with the help of volunteers and other charitable organizations.

The funding for this would come in part from the NRP (for the employee) and in part from the good will of volunteers or other organizations.

- **The High Synergy Scenario**

This would have the neighborhood hire a person with the sole responsibility of bringing in other charitable organizations. The person would actively seek places such as the YMCA or United Way to start programs in the Sheridan Neighborhood.

The person hired would be funded by the NRP and the position would only last as long as permitted by the NRP. By the end of the tenure, there should be many new youth programs in the Sheridan Neighborhood.

VI Conclusion

Serving youth and providing for youth activities can be one of the most beneficial things that a neighborhood can do to insure continued quality of life and security in the neighborhood. This is simple in theory but much more difficult in practice, which is why it is usually more efficient to bring in an outside resource with some experience. An outside resource not only brings know-how but can also bring outside capital, this is one of the most promising ideas to start up a program and also to somewhat guarantee that it will be a success. Cooperation between charitable organizations and the neighborhood seems to bring together the most practical and beneficial ideas to serve the youth of the neighborhood.

As a result of conducting this research and interacting with the people in a variety of Minneapolis neighborhoods, I feel strongly that implementation of a youth program would definitely benefit the youth of the Sheridan Neighborhood. Ideally, I believe the Sheridan Neighborhood should adopt a program similar to those in the Seward or Longfellow Neighborhoods which have successful and effective youth programs. Sheridan residents, however, should be wary of programs without definite leadership and responsibility to avoid the difficulties encountered in the Adobon Park Neighborhood, where a youth-run business was allotted for in the NRP plan, but was never initiated due to disorganization and infighting.

I feel that the needs of Sheridan youth could be met by implementing a plan similar to the NRP Light scenario, in which the neighborhood would hire one youth coordinator to deal with employment and activities. The Sheridan Neighborhood should clearly define the role of youth coordinator to insure clarity in executing the wishes of the Neighborhood residents.

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